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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
Twenty-third session

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Sierra Leone

1. The Committee received the initial report of Sierra Leone on 10 April 1996 (CRC/C/3/Add.43) and considered the report at its 593rd to 594th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.593-594), held on 13 January 2000, and adopted* the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the State party's initial report and takes note of the written answers to the list of issues (CRC/C/Q/SIR/1) submitted by the State party. The Committee notes with appreciation the delegation's efforts to provide all the information requested and takes note that the State party included in its delegation a representative of Sierra Leonean NGOs.

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* At the 615th meeting, held on 28 January 2000.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to fulfil its reporting obligations under the Convention in spite of the internal armed conflict that has continued since 1991. The Committee notes with satisfaction the signing on 7 July 1999 of a peace agreement in Lomé and the end of hostilities within the State party. The Committee is especially encouraged by the inclusion in the Lomé peace agreement of references to children's rights and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4. Further, the Committee is encouraged by the State party's efforts to seek assistance from the international community and to establish a truth and reconciliation commission which can contribute to the establishment of a lasting peace in an environment of respect for human rights. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to develop a child rights bill which would incorporate the provisions of the Convention in domestic law. The Committee further notes the State party's excellent cooperation with national NGOs and progress in disseminating the provisions and principles of the Convention.

C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

5. The Committee recognizes the severe social and economic difficulties imposed both upon the State party and upon the general population by the many years of armed conflict, including a period during which regional sanctions were imposed. The Committee recognizes, further, that the repeated changes of government within the State party, including through military action, have made it difficult to develop and implement a concerted policy of implementation of the Convention.

D. Principal subjects of concern, suggestions and recommendations

D.1. General measures of implementation
(arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6 of the Convention)

Legislation

6. The Committee is concerned that some aspects of existing legislation, and some aspects of customary law, are not consistent with the principles and provisions of the Convention. The Committee is concerned that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is not applicable in the courts.

7. **The Committee recommends that the State party undertake a review of existing legislation and of customary law practices and, where appropriate, adopt or amend legislation so as to ensure compatibility with the principles and provisions of the Convention. In addition, the Committee urges the State party to consider introducing legislation which would allow the Convention to be directly applicable in domestic courts.**

Coordination/independent monitoring structures

8. The Committee recognizes the State party's efforts to establish mechanisms through which coordination can be conducted. The Committee remains concerned, however, that these mechanisms are not themselves coordinated and that there is a lack of clear responsibility for the formulation of policy, lying with a single coordinating body. The Committee is also concerned at the absence of a clear monitoring structure and the lack of precise indicators according to which monitoring of the Convention's implementation can be conducted.

9. While the Committee is encouraged by the State party's efforts to develop projects focusing on children, the Committee emphasizes the importance of developing an overall strategy for the effective protection of children's rights, and that individual projects should each form a part of this larger strategy. Noting that the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs has principal responsibility for child protection issues, the Committee is concerned at the extreme lack of funding and other resources available to this Ministry.

10. **In this regard, the Committee urges the State party to secure adequate funding for the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs to ensure the effective implementation of its child protection mandate. The Committee recommends, in addition, that the State party expand the mandate of this Ministry to include coordination of the Convention's implementation, and provide the Ministry with the necessary authority and resources to develop a cross-ministerial strategy for the protection of children's rights.**

11. **The Committee further recommends that the State party consider the establishment of an independent body to monitor the Convention's implementation, and that the conclusions of such monitoring be used to improve the development and implementation of policies affecting children.**

Decentralization

12. The Committee is concerned that, in the past, the delivery of services and the overall implementation of children's rights have been severely hampered by an over-centralization of decision-making and policy implementation authority in the capital city.

13. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen ongoing efforts at decentralization of authority to the districts and local levels with regard to the implementation of the Convention**

The maximum extent of available resources: article 4

14. Recognizing that the effective implementation of the Convention relies upon an adequate and consistent allocation of budgetary resources, the Committee expresses concern at the lack of clarity in the current definition of resource allocation in favour of children.

15. **In the light of articles 2, 3, and 6 of the Convention, the Committee encourages the State party to pay particular attention to the full implementation of article 4 of the Convention by prioritizing budgetary allocations to ensure implementation of the rights of children, to the maximum extent of available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international cooperation. The Committee urges the State party to establish a clear policy on the allocation of resources in favour of children, including those resources allocated by international agencies or bilateral assistance, and to establish how these resources will be used in the medium-term future.**

International cooperation: article 4

16. Deeply concerned at the overall situation of children in the State party and the severe damage caused to national infrastructure and the economy by the years of conflict, the Committee is concerned at the State party's limited resources with which to address such a wide array of problems.

17. **The Committee strongly recommends that the State party seek extensive international cooperation towards the implementation of the principles and provisions of the Convention, bearing in mind the need to strengthen national capacity.**

Cooperation with NGOs

18. The Committee recognizes the very significant cooperation developed between the State party and national NGOs in favour of children, but is concerned that a disproportionate level of resources are used through international NGOs, to the detriment of national organizations and structures.

19. **The Committee urges the State party to maintain the important progress made so far and to continue to work closely with national NGOs. The Committee further urges the State party to strengthen national NGOs by encouraging international partners to favour these national structures in their funding and implementation programmes.**

Dissemination of the Convention

20. Recogizing the particular importance of an understanding of children's rights in post-conflict reconstruction in the State party, and particularly in contexts where some customary law or traditional practices may be harmful for some children, the Committee acknowledges the progress made by the State party in disseminating the principles and provisions of the Convention. The Committee remains concerned, however, that dissemination and understanding of the Convention has not been followed by corresponding implementation in the everyday activities or work of civil servants and the population at large.

21. **In the light of article 42, the Committee recommends that the State party make additional efforts in the dissemination of the Convention, provide training on its provisions for professionals, inter-alia law officials, teachers and health workers, and provide teaching on its provisions to the adult population. The State party should ensure that such training focuses on, and contributes to, practical implementation of the Convention's**

provisions and principles. In addition, the Committee recommends that the State party make every effort to develop a culture of knowledge and respect for human rights in all sectors of the population.

D.2 Definition of the child (art. 1)

22. The Committee is concerned that the definition of a child is not consistent in domestic legislation, noting that under the Sierra Leone Citizenship Act of 1973 "a person shall be of full age if he has attained the age of 21 years". Similarly, a "child" is defined in the Education Act as "a person under the age of 21 years" (State party report, para. 25). However, the Committee notes that under the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act a child is defined as a person under the age of 16.

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party conduct a review of domestic legislation so as to ensure a consistent definition of a child and to adopt 18 years or above as the age of majority.**

Minimum age of marriage

24. The Committee is very concerned at the practice of arranging marriages - under customary law - for very young girls, in particular against the free will of the child. The Committee notes that such practices violate the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party undertake child rights promotional activities in communities which apply such customary law practices, explaining the rights of children in this regard with a view to ensuring that a minimum age for marriage is established, that it is the same for both boys and girls, and that girls are not forced into marriage.**

Minimum age of recruitment/conscription

26. The Committee is deeply concerned at the massive participation of children in armed forces in the State party, either as combatants or in other roles. The Committee also notes that no minimum age is established in national legislation for voluntary recruitment - when the consent of a specified adult party is given.

27. **The Committee welcomes the State party's announcement of its intention to pass legislation raising the minimum age of recruitment to 18, and urges the State party to move quickly towards this goal and to ensure that the new legislation is enforced.**

The age of criminal responsibility

28. The Committee is concerned that the minimum age of criminal responsibility - set at 10 years by domestic legislation - is very low.

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party review relevant legislation and raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility.**

D.3. General principles
(arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the Convention)

Principle of non-discrimination: article 2

Prohibition of discrimination

30. The Committee welcomes the inclusion in the State party Constitution of a provision prohibiting discrimination, but remains concerned that some of the criteria listed as prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Convention on the Rights of the Child are absent from the State party Constitution.

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party review the Constitution and other relevant national legal instruments, enlarging the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination to include "disability, birth, other [than political] opinion", as provided for in article 2 of the Convention. The Committee further urges the State party to implement effective measures to prevent discrimination and to address those cases which continue to occur.**

Discriminatory practices

32. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned at the extent to which ethnic and gender discrimination are witnessed in the State party, in spite of domestic legislation prohibiting such discrimination.

33. **Recognizing the many different ways in which direct or indirect discrimination affects girls, and that discrimination against women, involving such issues as inheritance rights, can have a major impact on their capacity to provide for the needs of their children, the Committee urges the State party to give particular attention to addressing discrimination against both girls and women, inter alia by reviewing domestic legislation so as to ensure that discriminatory provisions are removed and that adequate protection from discrimination is provided.**

34. While the Committee is encouraged by the exclusion of girls from the application by domestic courts of corporal punishment sentences, the Committee nevertheless considers this provision to be discriminatory between boys and girls.

35. **The Committee urges the State party to extend the prohibition of State sanctioned corporal punishment to boys.**

Principle of the best interests of the child: article 3

36. The Committee is concerned at indications that the principle of the best interests of the child has not been systematically taken into consideration in administrative and legal policy and practice.

37. **The Committee recommends that the State party consider ways through which the principle of the best interests of the child can be promoted and protected.**

The right to have views heard and given due weight: article 12

38. The Committee emphasizes the importance for the State party of promoting respect for the views of the child and encouraging child participation.

39. **The Committee encourages the State party to promote public awareness of the participatory rights of children and to take effective measures to ensure respect for the views of the child within schools, families, social institutions, and the care and judicial systems.**

The principle of the survival and development of the child: article 6

40. The Committee is concerned that efforts to respect the principle of the survival and development of the child have focused primarily on children living in cities and the main towns.

41. **The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to ensure that policy, programmes and activities focus on respecting the principle of the survival and development of all children.**

D.4. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, 13-17 and 37 (a))

The right to birth registration: article 7

42. The Committee is concerned that the absence of systematic birth registration in the State party, thereby preventing an accurate statement of the identity or age of a child, can make it very difficult for the protection afforded to children by domestic legislation or by the Convention to be enforced. The Committee is also concerned at the arbitrary manner, in the absence of birth registration records, in which age and identity are frequently established.

43. **In the light of article 7 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party establish as quickly as is possible a practice of systematic birth registration for all children born within the national territory. The Committee further urges the State party to proceed with the registration of those children who have not thus far been registered.**

The right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 37 (a))

44. The Committee expresses its grave concern over the reported massive occurrence of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including amputations and mutilations, committed against children.

45. **Recognizing that the majority of these acts were committed in the context of the armed conflict, and with a with to achieving reconciliation and prevention, the Committee urges the State party to use the truth and reconciliation Commission process to raise discussion on such acts. The Committee, in addition, urges the State party to undertake measures which will ensure that such acts will, in the future, receive an appropriate response through the judicial process.**

Corporal punishment

46. The Committee is concerned that corporal punishment is widely practised in the State party and that, in particular, it is used in the sentencing of boys under the age of 17 by domestic courts.

47. **In the light of articles 19, 28 (2) and 37 (a) of the Convention, the Committee urges the State party to take legislative and educative measures to prohibit the use of corporal punishment by the courts, all public officials and in schools, and to consider the prohibition of its use in the family.**

D.5. Family environment and alternative care
(arts. 5; 18 (paras. 1-2); 9-11; 19-21; 25; 27 (para. 4); and 39)

Parental guidance and responsibilities

48. The Committee is concerned that parents and families, particularly given the specific nature of the recent conflict, are in need of support and guidance with regard to their responsibilities for children under their care. The Committee is concerned, further, at reports indicating that some children, such as those who were forced to participate in hostilities, are not always accepted back into their families and communities.

49. **The Committee recommends that the State party make every effort to strengthen family ties and the capacity of parents to fulfil their role in contributing to the protection of children's rights and providing, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the Convention. The Committee recommends, inter alia, the strengthening of existing mechanisms which provide guidance to parents and families, and that equal emphasis, in such efforts, be placed on the roles of women and of men.**

Children deprived of a family environment

50. The Committee is deeply concerned at the large numbers of children who have been deprived of a family environment through the death of, or separation from, their parents or other family, and at reports of the difficulties and slow progress in tracing separated families and children. The Committee is concerned, further, that children deprived of their family environment may increasingly travel to the main towns, where they may live on the streets and be particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

51. **The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to strengthen family tracing programmes and also to plan for the effective provision of alternative care for separated children, with particular focus on unaccompanied children living in the streets of main towns and making use of the extended family, foster care and other alternative family structures.**

Adoption (art. 11)

52. The Committee notes the introduction by the State party of the 1989 Adoption Act, but is nevertheless concerned that child nationals of the State party may remain vulnerable to problems of illegal adoption, including inter-country adoption.

53. **The Committee recommends that the State party ratify the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Inter-country Adoption with a view to providing additional legal protection.**

D.6. Basic health and welfare
(arts. 6; 18, para. 3; 23; 24; 26; 27, paras. 1-3)

Health services

54. Taking note of the very high child and maternal mortality rates, rates of malnutrition and various preventable diseases and the probability of widespread psychological trauma, the Committee is concerned at the very low coverage of basic health services across the country and at the absence of mental health facilities.

55. **The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to rebuild national health infrastructures and to ensure the access of the whole population to basic health services, including in rural areas. The Committee recommends, in addition, the establishment of a comprehensive mental health service. Further, the Committee urges the State party to seek international cooperation in implementing this recommendation.**

Children with disabilities: article 23

56. Recognizing that children with disabilities may be especially disadvantaged by the conditions inherent in armed conflicts, the Committee is concerned at the limited information provided by the State party on the situation of children with disabilities. Noting the existence of some facilities specific to children with disabilities, the Committee nevertheless emphasizes that respect for the rights of children with disabilities requires an integrated approach to the overall situation of such children.

57. **In the light of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly Resolution 48/96), the Committee's recommendations adopted at its Day of General Discussion on the Rights of Children with Disabilities (CRC/C/69), and with particular reference to article 23 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party conduct an assessment of the number of children with disabilities, the type of disabilities and the needs of children with disabilities with regard to rehabilitative and other forms of care, and make every effort to improve the facilities and services available. The Committee supports the State party in its efforts to include children with disabilities in the mainstream education process and recommends that these efforts be pursued and that every effort be made to address the concerns raised in the State party's assessment.**

58. **The Committee further encourages the State party to make every effort to benefit from international cooperation in favour of children with disabilities, in accordance with to article 23 paragraph 4 of the Convention.**

HIV/AIDS

59. The Committee is deeply concerned that the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the State party is likely to have risen significantly during the period of armed conflict and population displacement.

60. **The Committee recommends that the State party urgently develop mechanisms to effectively monitor the incidence and spread of HIV/AIDS. The Committee further recommends that the State party rapidly develop and implement a strategy for prevention, including through the use of information campaigns, and for care of people who are victims of HIV/AIDS, including for alternative care of their children. In this regard, the Committee urges the State party to seek assistance from the World Health Organization.**

Traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children: article 24.3

61. The Committee is very concerned at the widespread practice of female genital mutilation.

62. **In the light of article 24.3 of the Convention, the Committee urges the State party to pass legislation prohibiting practices of female genital mutilation, to ensure that such legislation is enforced in practice and to undertake preventive information campaigns. The Committee further recommends that the State party benefit from the experience of other States in this area and consider, inter alia, adopting alternative practices of a purely ceremonial nature, which do not involve any physical acts.**

Psychological care

63. The Committee is concerned that the State party has insufficient capacity to provide psycho-social assistance to the many children who have suffered forms of psychological trauma.

64. **The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to strengthen available psycho-social assistance and to recruit more mental health workers. The Committee recommends, in addition, that the State party seek technical assistance in this domain.**

D.7. Education, leisure and cultural activities
(arts. 28, 29, 31)

The right to education: articles 28 and 29

65. The Committee is deeply concerned over the lack of implementation of the right to education of children in the State party. The Committee is concerned particularly at the drastic fall in the number of primary schools, with the remaining schools concentrated primarily in the main towns to the exclusion of the rural population. The Committee is further concerned at information indicating that 70 per cent of primary schoolteachers are not qualified and at the very high drop-out rates of children from primary school education. In addition, while recognizing the State party's efforts to provide free education to children in the first three years of primary school, the Committee notes that State party assistance to pupils and parents only covers school fees and does not provide for other education related costs. Children in other classes must carry the entire burden of the cost of their education.

66. **Recognizing the efforts made by the State party to establish schools in displaced persons camps and to raise the levels of enrolment among both girls and boys, the Committee urges the State party to rapidly re-open primary schools in all regions of the country, including in rural areas, so as to ensure that every child has access to primary education. With a view to assuring a better quality of education, the Committee further urges the State party to encourage trained teachers who have left the State party to return, to strengthen teacher training courses so as to increase the number and standard of teachers, and to invest sufficient resources in the education system to provide adequate school facilities, materials and salaries for teachers. The Committee urges the State party to ensure that education is entirely free for all students, including through the provision of assistance to purchase uniforms and school books. The Committee also recommends that the State party seek assistance from international agencies, such as UNICEF.**

67. **The Committee encourages the State party in its efforts to integrate peace education, civil education and human rights into its teacher training programmes and school curricula, and recommends that the State party continue this process, expanding it to include child rights, and ensure that every child receives such education.**

68. The Committee expresses its particular concern at the very high rate of illiteracy among women and the extremely low levels of primary school enrolment and graduation among girls.

69. **The Committee recommends that the State party make every effort to increase the enrolment and graduation rates of girls in primary education, inter alia through the promotion of children's rights in rural communities and through the enforcement of compulsory primary education requirements.**

D.8. Special protection measures
(arts. 22, 38, 39, 40, 37 (b)-(d), 32-36)

Armed conflict

70. The Committee expresses its extremely deep consternation at the very high numbers of children who have been forcibly recruited into armed forces, including children as young as five years old, and who have often been forced to commit atrocities against other people, including other children and members of their community. The Committee expresses its great concern at the horrifying amputation of hands, arms and legs, and at the many other atrocities and acts of violence and cruelty committed by armed persons against children, including, in some cases, against very young children.

71. The Committee is deeply saddened by the direct effects of the armed conflict on all child victims, including child combatants, and is concerned at the tragic loss of life and severe psychological trauma inflicted upon them. The Committee is also concerned by the very high number of children who have been internally displaced within the country or who have been forced to leave as refugees including, in particular, those who have been separated from their parents.

72. The Committee is further concerned at the indirect effects of the armed conflict - the destruction of educational and health infrastructures, of water collection, purification and distribution systems, of the national economy, of agricultural production, of communication infrastructure - all of which have contributed to a massive and continuing violation for a majority of children in the State party of many of the rights provided for in the Convention.

73. **The Committee urges the State party to take every feasible measure to have all child abductees and combatants released and demobilized and to rehabilitate and reintegrate them in society. The Committee further recommends that the State party establish and strictly enforce legislation prohibiting the future recruitment, by any armed force or group, of children under the age of 18, in accordance with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.**

74. **The Committee also urges the State party to take all necessary measures in cooperation with national and international NGOs and United Nations bodies, such as UNICEF, to address the physical needs of children victims of the armed conflict, in particular child amputees, and the psychological needs of all children affected directly or indirectly by the traumatic experiences of the war. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party develop as quickly as possible a long-term and comprehensive programme of assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration.**

75. **The Committee further urges the State party to make every effort to assist children who have been displaced from their homes to return as soon as possible, including through assistance in the reconstruction of homes and other essential infrastructure, within the framework of international cooperation.**

Unaccompanied, asylum seeking and refugee children: article 22

76. The Committee is concerned at the situation of the continuing numbers of unaccompanied children in the State party.

77. **The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to support these children through, inter alia, family tracing activities and assistance in gaining access to health services, schools or vocational training activities, as appropriate.**

78. The Committee is deeply concerned at the situation of the many children, citizens of the State party, who are currently refugees.

79. **The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to create conditions conducive to the return of child refugees and their families, including through international cooperation, inter alia, that of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.**

Economic exploitation: article 32

80. The Committee is concerned by the increasing incidence of child labour, in particular on the streets of the main towns, and anticipates that, in the current post-conflict situation, the number of children engaged in such labour is likely to increase. The Committee is especially concerned at the situation of children begging in cities and major towns.

81. **The Committee urges the State party to make urgent efforts to monitor and address the use of children as labour, including through action to address the causes of child labour. The Committee urges the State party to seek international cooperation, including, for example, through the International Labour Organization's International Proramme for the Eradication of Child Labour (IPEC).**

82. **The Committee recommends that the State party consider ratifying International Labour Organization Conventions No. 138, concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973), and No. 182, concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999).**

Drug abuse

83. The Committee is concerned at the recent and rapid increase in the abuse of drugs by children, particularly among child former combatants.

84. **Recognizing the State party's efforts in Freetown to combat drug use, the Committee urges the State party to establish similar activities in other towns and in internally displaced persons camps. The Committee recommends, in addition, that the State party seek international cooperation in this domain, including for the provision of psycho-social assistance for addicts.**

Sexual exploitation and abuse

85. The Committee is concerned that provisions in national domestic legislation providing protection to children from sexual exploitation and abuse only offer such protection to children up to the age of 14.

86. **The Committee recommends that the State party review domestic legislation in order to raise the age levels of such protection, and to ensure that boys benefit from the same protection as girls.**

87. The Committee expresses its deep concern with regard to the many incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse of children, particularly in the context of the conscription or abduction of children by armed persons and in the context of attacks on civilian populations by armed persons, and particularly with regard to girls. The Committee is also concerned at reports of commercial sexual exploitation and of widespread sexual abuse of girls within the family, within internally displaced person camps and within communities.

88. **The Committee urges the State party to include studies of incidents of sexual abuse in the context of the armed conflict among the issues to be discussed by the truth and reconciliation commission. The Committee recommends that the State party initiate information campaigns alerting the public to the risks of sexual abuse within the family and within communities. In addition, the Committee urges the State party to provide the necessary psychological and material assistance to the victims of such exploitation and abuse and to assure their protection from any possible social stigmatization. The Committee further encourages the State party, in its efforts to address practices of commercial sexual exploitation, to take into account the recommendations formulated in the Agenda for Action adopted at the World Congress Against Commercial Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in 1996.**

89. **With regard to sexual abuse in the family and communities, the Committee recommends that the State party consider the establishment of mechanisms through which incidents can be identified, reported and addressed, inter alia through medical professionals, law enforcement and judicial officials.**

Administration of juvenile justice: articles 37, 40 and 39

90. The Committee is concerned at the absence of precise data on the numbers and situation of children in detention or serving prison sentences in the State party. The Committee is also concerned at the very poor conditions in prisons and detention facilities in the State party. The Committee is further concerned that domestic legislation requires only that minors in detention be separated from adults as far as circumstances permit.

91. **While recognizing the limited resources available to the State party, the Committee recommends, nevertheless, that every effort be made to gather information on the numbers and legal situation of children currently in detention in the State party. The Committee urges the State party to apply domestic legislation requirements that imprisonment be a measure of last resort, particularly given the prevailing conditions in national detention facilities. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen and make use of alternatives to imprisonment.**

92. **In the light of articles 37 and 40 and 39 of the Convention, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Guidelines on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, the Committee recommends that the State party harmonize domestic legislation, as a whole, with relevant international legal instruments and seek to apply the international standards provided for in these instruments.**

93. **The Committee further recommends the training of personnel involved with the juvenile justice process in child psychology and development and relevant human rights law. In this regard, the Committee further suggests that the State party consider seeking additional technical assistance from, inter alia, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Centre for International Crime Prevention, the International Network on Juvenile Justice and UNICEF, through the Coordination Panel on Juvenile Justice.**

Dissemination of the report, written answers and concluding observations

94. **Finally, in the light of article 44, paragraph 6, of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the initial report and written replies submitted by the State party be made widely available to the public at large and that the publication of the report be considered, along with the relevant summary records and concluding observations adopted thereon by the Committee. Such a document should be widely distributed in order to generate debate and awareness of the Convention, its implementation and monitoring within the Government, the Parliament and the general public, including concerned non-governmental organizations. The Committee recommends that the State party request international cooperation in this regard.**